

QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN CROATIA AND PERSPECTIVES OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION — APPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Linda Juraković

PhD, Assistant Professor,
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula
30 Zagrebačka Str., Pula, Croatia, 52100
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2027-8814>
linda.jurakovic@gmail.com

Tea Golja

PhD, Associate Professor,
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula
30 Zagrebačka Str., Pula, Croatia, 52100
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3665-8181>
tea.golja@unipu.hr

Matteo Legović

Juraj Dobrila University of Pula
30 Zagrebačka Str., Pula, Croatia, 52100
matteo.legovic@student.unipu.hr

Abstract. In recent years education has been in the process of reorganization, especially when education has faced major challenges due to the coronavirus pandemic. Today, emphasizing the importance of human potential, the management of educational institutions and the quality of the entire education system face certain challenges. Based on many years of research, the authors note that management has not achieved a necessary level of cognition being a vital component of efficient management. In Croatia, there is a large deficit of students enrolled in high school tourism courses. On the other hand, Croatia, as one of the most developed tourist destination on the Mediterranean, is in a state of high demand for quality and educated tourism workers. With regard to this issue, in this paper, the authors proposed a project for research of competences of school principals for the function of managing educational institutions.

Keywords: education, management in education, educational institutions, tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Schools, as bearers of a social progress, have been undergoing the reconstruction, integration and changes for many years, especially in the last two years of the pandemic and post-pandemic period. The necessity of educational management research stems from the deep changes that Croatian society, in particular, educational institutions is undergoing.

This is the result of changes not only in the globalizing environment, but also in domestic economy, culture, demography, and society. These conditions demand a continuous reflection on the role of education in the creation of a ground-breaking and progressive society and economy, which would be adaptable to unpredictable challenges in the future. In contemporary societies, intellectual capital has an advantage over natural assets and financial capital regarding the development of the country. Today, investments in knowledge are significantly increasing, the importance of which is prioritized in strategic development projects and is directly applied to boosting the quality of school management. This imposes the concept of lifelong learning as the basis of education, which encourages the individual (director) to learn, improve through theoretical and practical experiences and knowledge in the domain of management.

This paper studies the quality of education in Croatia and perspectives of the quality management of education. The paper analyzes theoretically the quality of education and management in education. Based on many years of researches, the authors will present a project proposal for researching the competence of school principals, emphasizing education in tourism, as one of the important issues in Croatia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

Mašunović states (2001) that the school system of a country consists of the institutions that are responsible for the population's education and establish the educational process with the help of the scope of certain activities by functioning partially or generally. The functioning of educational institutions is managed by basic laws and regulations. Meanwhile, the School System is established to regulate the relationships between schools and other school institutions. As Juraković, Tatković i Juričić (2011) stated, according to the National Classification, schools do not pertain to economic sphere. The common trait of non-economic institutions is that they are set up to satisfy social concerns and demands and are not profitable (with the exception of private schools). Owing to this fact, the proceeds from the activities of non-profit institutions are used exclusively for the improvement of the entity. School systems that act as pillars for the benefit of the society are occasionally seen as ineffective, perplexing and uncontrolled. Doubts are raised about the responsibility of the teaching staff, regarding the common ineffectiveness that exists among the youth at the end of their education, when acquired knowledge have to be applied directly in the production process.

The up-to-date approach to school management requires such administration that could run the school environment in such a way as to enable professional, young staff (students) to find employment easier and their place in the economy after completing their education. Such a contemporary approach to school administration focuses on the «new», and sees the foundations of change in a careful analysis of the traditional and modern working methods. It is time the ineffective methods were rejected in education. The modern school managerial approach respects the personality of teachers and students, emphasizes the teamwork between teachers and students. It also involves the constructivist approach to upbringing and education that pedagogic activity strives for, while it has gained a foothold in the economy

regarding the realization of profit. Specifically, in education, the biggest profit is made by the students (excluding private schools) when they apply the acquired competences in order to get involved in their work as quickly and qualitatively as possible after completing their education. In accordance with the new Education, Science and Technology Strategy (2014), the training of personnel for the management of primary, secondary and higher education institutions, as well as other models of lifelong education, is foreseen.

Juraokvić, Ilak Peršurić and Tomčić (2008) conducted a research on the management of primary and secondary schools. The study was carried out in eight schools, two secondary and six primary schools. The hypothesis that management differ in primary and secondary schools was proved. Thus, in secondary schools, management is a part of the curriculum, while in primary schools there is no such subject. The job profile of school administrator was not linked to management and did not include management as a subject in school curriculum. According to the results of the study, only 25 percent of education staff and school managers knew the purpose, goals, and meaning of educational management. All school managers responded that management is essential and helpful for students and the youth in the society. Moreover, the vast majority of school managers (87, 5 percent) were satisfied with their functions. The same number of school managers replied that there is a need of the school management team. Furthermore, all school managers are of the same opinion that such a team should possess a wide range of knowledge and skills linked to educational management. The most important ones involve financial, promotional, psychological, legal and general culture competences.

Research on education as an aspect of tourism development in Croatia was conducted by Bartoluci, Hendija and Petračić (2014). They confirmed that to boost the quality and competitiveness of tourism in Croatia, it is essential to significantly enhance the rate of skilled professionals in tourism. In order to realize this proposal, Bartoluci, Hendija and Petračić (2014) suggest the following steps:

- «modify the image of tourism, raise the prestige of working in tourism by emphasizing the continuous growth of demand for such well-trained professionals, highlight the benefits of jobs in the tourism sphere for women, the youth, and people with with a low education level, and draw attention to the possibility to gain extra income during the peak tourist season,
- advance education at all levels (from secondary schools to higher education institutions),
- create conditions for opportunities for learning throughout life and constant professional development and progress for the personnel,
- promote the acquisition of international certification by the personnel,
- study the changes in the demand on the market (what kind of services tourists would like to receive), and persistently adapt the offer to these changes (follow the market trends) since it is insufficient to satisfy the ongoing needs for employees, but it is necessary to take into account the future».

PROJECT PROPOSAL: RESEARCH OF THE QUALITY AND COMPETENCE OF PRINCIPALS FOR THE FUNCTION OF MANAGING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

We are aware of the fact that each small environment is a subject and requires special

treatment due to its specific cultural identity. Such specificities apply to the types of schools and their management. Although school contents, i.e. plans and programs (curricula) can be the same for all schools in the Republic of Croatia in terms of their content, the strategic part of their implementation should be adapted in certain segments to the area where the school is located. Thus, management serves as the holder of the general and specific interest of the entire community. It is the market that demands and creates new jobs, and in parallel with that, schools should follow market trends. As these are professional occupations and service activities, the combination of theory and practice is inevitable. The effectiveness of school management should enable future young professionals to leave the classrooms and enter the working environment, for which they were trained, fitting in with as little preparation as possible. The school management, therefore, assumes the duality of management as follows:

Internal management – organizing the educational process with all ongoing responsibilities (human resources – teaching staff, teaching aids, work program, etc.).

Outward management – connecting the school (students and teachers) with contents and organizations in the economy.

A qualified management team, when we talk about a school as a pro-social community, can include such professionals as a pedagogue, a social pedagogue, a psychologist, a teacher, a professional manager and other professional associates who directly or indirectly participate in shaping the educational process. However, the school manager as a special staff member (who occupies a specified position) does not exist in the school system, although this role can be taken by any expert in the field of education who will receive the manager's qualification through subsequent training and specialization. The management of an educational institution (school), accepting all the specifics of the environment where it is located, should fulfill the range of tasks as follows:

1. determine long-term and short-term school development plans,
2. make preparations for the development of plans and appoint personnel,
3. coordinate development actions,
4. provide all available information systems,
5. modernize the school curriculum,
6. enhance the flow of information at all levels of management,
7. arrange and carry out the marketing study with a view to determine the priorities of the target market areas,
8. define (based on the study) the marketing goals and marketing strategies for the school,
9. define the final work program of the school,
10. engage the personnel who will be responsible for the public relations (so-called spokespeople),
11. manage tasks related to determining the price of certain programs (a financial sector),
12. organize group and individual meetings where school problems or individual student's problems will be solved,
13. act in the direction of constant monitoring of the (internal) competitiveness of the teaching staff, examine their needs, shortcomings, achievements, etc.,
14. connect and maintain relationships with sponsors and donors,
15. establish connections with schools and experts at the international level,

16. adapt the actions of students and teachers to current issues of the environment in which the school is located, tensions and trends,

17. adapt the default theories of educational content to the service and social sectors of the locality,

18. build stable interpersonal relationships within the educational institution (human resources),

19. encourage students, teachers and other school employees to initiate new ideas and projects (manager/team),

20. continuously study the needs and wishes of all members of the educational institution,

21. strive to develop a competitive advantage over other schools regarding the quality and results, because competitiveness on the market is one of the most important strategies and goals of today's educational work,

22. encourage the incorporation of cultural content of the community into the sphere of school events.

If the school management fulfills all these tasks and brings its educational institution to the rank of an influential institution in terms of organization and results of its work, it gains «market power». In the conditions of the globalized world, schools should specially regard education as a means to refurbish the national cultural heritage and raise the population's awareness of the necessity to nurture national identity by introducing a bigger amount of national culture content in the school and higher education curricula. The cultivation of new teachers' and students' competences in order to increase the comprehension, familiarity with and transmission of the educational content cannot be achieved solely by work in the lecture hall/classroom, but through the application of various techniques and methods of extracurricular activities (for example, excursions, trips, sightseeing, etc). Moreover, such an approach upholds the elaboration of new curricula, which would include the training of management personnel as a fundamental aim, especially in the field of operational management. Directors should be trained to perform specific jobs and tasks applying an interdisciplinary approach with special emphasis on the social and financial aspects of business. The special goals of the program for training of directors should be focused on lectures, seminars, and practical work with the following goals:

- get acquainted with operating processes in organizing and managing the school,
- get acquainted with the management of human, material and financial resources,
- receive training for the application of information and communication technology.

Upon completion of education, principals should be trained to create and implement the following activities: the creation of development strategies, the creation of financial administration systems, the administration of projects and the school property, obtaining knowledge about digital marketing, advisory services, cooperation with the local community (economy) and Ph.D. For the sake of better insight into the state of Croatian school management, some European experiences in school management (Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Hungary) will be analyzed and compared.

According to the content of the project, the goal and tasks of the research are set. The main goal of the research is to analyze the qualities and competencies of principals for the function of managing primary and secondary schools on a sample of all primary and

secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia, covering all counties. Apart from that, the comparative method allowed to analyze the existing school management systems in several other countries and to single out examples that can be implemented in Croatia.

Research tasks are as follows:

1. find out the number of representatives of school management (management-educated staff) in primary and secondary schools,
2. assess the principal's knowledge of the subject of school management,
3. examine the principal's wishes regarding the introduction of management in schools,
4. learn about the principal's previous experience and knowledge of school management,
5. evaluate the current competences of school principals and their views on management,
6. analyze what knowledge should be acquired by those who manage the school as a pro-social community,
7. estimate to what extent school management is represented in secondary and primary schools,
8. indicate the directions of the applications of the obtained results.

The research would be based on the hypothesis according to which the quality of management in primary and secondary schools in Croatia varies in dependence of the school profile and the principal's professional qualities (education, type of completed studies, experience). In addition, the high-quality development of the school depends mostly on the quality of the school management (principal/team).

For the purposes of this research, a specially structured questionnaire would be constructed, which would analyze the following variables:

- general identification data about the school,
- general identification information about the principal,
- representation of school management in the institution,
- competencies of the current management staff (the principal),
- familiarity of principals with the term and purpose of school management,
- previous education of principals (if any) in the field of management and which forms of lifelong education they resorted to in order to obtain it (e.g. courses, seminars or classic management studies),
 - the needs of principals to acquire basic knowledge in the field of school management,
 - what knowledge principals consider necessary for school management (which areas),
 - whether the directors have a need for a management team and which experts such a team should be formed of,
 - what the principals think the school manager (team) should do for the development of the school and what his/her current limitations are (e.g. financial, managerial, political, legal, etc.),
 - the need to introduce a form of education (professional, university) in the domain of school management/lifelong education.

Other research methods include the observation, the method of comparison, the analysis and synthesis, the statistical method (data processing), and the historical method.

This research would serve the purpose of better understanding the management competencies of current school principals. On the basis of the obtained results, scientific

and professional papers can be written, proposals for strategic development in school management can be given, the quality of the current management would be improved and increased (if there is a need), and the problem (if any) of connecting the school (curriculum) with the needs of the economy would be detected. Apart from that, strategic guidelines for school development (if there is a need) and a better connection with the local community would be specified, guidelines would be given for the introduction of some forms of education in school management in order to enhance better development of modern Croatia.

All information obtained through the survey questionnaire would be processed statistically. The significance of relations between variables would be tested by means of the chi-square test, etc. Econometric calculation models would be used.

CONCLUSION

Management is an essential component of the progress and development, with knowledge and behaviour being crucial for success. Educated and highly qualified managers are responsible for organizing the working process in such a way so that all personnel is engaged in certain activities, applying all material resources of the business process. Concerns about the efficiency of management as a subject in a curriculum are likely to emerge owing to the lack of relevant knowledge of this issue and insufficient amount of information provided for educational workers.

Based on many years of research, the authors conclude that management has not achieved the appropriate level of development and realization in education. Thus, being a vital component of effective management, it has not become an indispensable part of educational programs as a school subject. According to all the researches conducted since 2006 until now (Juraković, Ilak Peršurić, Tomčić, 2008; Juraković, Tatković, Juričić, 2011; Juraković, Tatković, 2012; Tatković, Juraković, 2014; Tatković, Juraković, Tatković, 2016; Tatković, Juraković, Tatković, 2019; Juraković et. al., 2020; Staraj et. al., 2021), it has been concluded that curriculum and school programs need to be modified. Moreover, future generations should be taught management, especially tourism management (Golja, 2016).

The current models of education in Croatia are particularly insufficient for the education of tourism workers, especially managers in tourism. There is also an extremely large deficit for work and workers in the tourism sector. In addition, the current political situation is not favorable to the development and education of tourism workers who would follow current tourism trends. With view to increase the quality of education, especially in the tourism sector, the authors suggest to conduct research on the competencies of principals for managing educational institutions with the aim of higher quality tourism development in Croatia. As the next phase of the research, Juraković, Golja and Legović will implement the proposed research project.

REFERENCES

- Golja, T., (2016). *Management in culture and tourism*. Pula: Jurja Dobrila University in Pula.
- Juraković, L., & Tatković, N. (2012). *Contemporary school management— a challenge for primary and secondary schools, Society and Technology*. Zagreb: Croatian Communication Association, and International Federation of Communication Association, 380-386.

Juraković, L., (2006). Creativity in the educational process. *Revija Iskanje, Community of boarding schools, Slovenia*.

Juraković, L., Ilak Peršurić, A. S., & Tomčić, Z., (2008). Management of primary and secondary schools. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference An Enterprise Odyssey : Tourism-Governance and Entrepreneurship, Ekonomski fakultet Osijek, Zagreb*, p. 417-428.

Juraković, L., Tatković, N., & Juričić, M. (2011). Management of primary and secondary schools. *Education-Technology-Computer Science*, 2,(1), 175-190.

Juraković, L., Tatković, N., Radulović, P., & Vekić, M. (2020). Preschool teachers' attitudes to the use of information and communication technology in preschool institutions. In *Fundamental and applied researches in practice of leading scientific schools*, Pula, 66-72.

Mušanović, M. (2001). *Pedagogy of professional education*. Rijeka,:Grafrade.

Staraj, R., Juraković, L., Nemrava, J., & Vekić, M., (2021), Contemporary education should begin in preschool age – quality education as a basis of development of educational, cultural and health institutions, *Single Educational Space in the Conditions of Digital Transformation*, Collective monograph, p. 15-31.

Tatković, N., Juraković, L. (2014). Implementation of Bologna process-Experiences and Challenges, In *Education for Development*. Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Department of Educational Sciences, Pula, p. 57-72.

Tatković, N., Juraković, L., Tatković, S. (2016), Prospects of Education for Development in the Context of the Bologna Process Guidelines and the Role of Stress in the Academic Adjustment of University Students, In *Perspectives of education for development in the context of active Citizenship*. Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Croatia, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Pula, p. 3-23.

Tatković, N., Juraković, L., Tatković, S. (2019). Developing computer literacy among elementary school children – Education for the future. *Asian Life Sciences The Asian International Journal of Life Sciences, Supplement 21(2)*, p. 371-383.